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SUBJECT: JORDANIAN COURT SENTENCES 8 TO DEATH FOR FOLEY
ASSASSINATION

REF: AMMAN 2633

1. (U) The Jordanian State Security Court on April 6 sentenced eight men to death for killing USAID official Laurence Foley in front of his Amman home on October 28, 2002. All six suspects tried in absentia, including Jordanian national and al-Qa'ida affiliate Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, received the death sentence, as did two of the five in custody: Libyan national and triggerman Salem Bin Sweid, and driver of the getaway car, Jordanian Yasser Freihat.

2. (U) Judge Fawaz Bqour also sentenced two Jordanian men to jail terms for their involvement in the conspiracy. The judge sentenced Mohammed Amin Abu Saeed and Mohammed De'mes to 15 years hard labor, but immediately reduced De'mes's sentence to six years. The court acquitted the eleventh suspect, Jordanian Numan al-Hirsh, based on the lack of evidence.

3. (U) In addition to Zarqawi, the other five sentenced to death in absentia include: Palestinian Shaker Yusef al-Absi, Jordanian Muamar Ahmad al-Jaghbeer, and Syrian nationals Mohammad Ahmad Tayourah, Ahmad Hussein Hassoun, and Mahmoud Abdul Rahman Thaher.

4. (U) According to a journalist present during the sentencing, the five defendants in custody shouted "Allahu Akbar" and "this verdict is unfair" as Judge Bqour read their sentence in the small and heavily guarded Amman courtroom. The five had pleaded innocent, charging that Jordanian investigators had extracted their initial confessions using torture.

COMMENT

5. (U) The death sentences will be automatically appealed to the Court of Cassation. Following a trend set by a number of recent terrorism cases, we expect the two who got lighter sentences also to appeal. Post has issued a statement acknowledging the verdict and commending Jordanian officials for their assistance in bringing Foley's assassins to justice. RSO and Jordanian Public Security Directorate are in contact on any possible security ramifications of this decision.

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